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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 006098

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: GOI INQUIRY ON HELICOPTER PARTS SALE TO IRAN

CLASSIFIED BY: ACTING DEPUTY CHIEF OF MISSION JOHN DWYER  
FOR REASONS 1.5 (B) (D)

1. (C) AT THE END OF A DECEMBER 13 MEETING WITH A/DCM ON A SEPARATE ISSUE, BERLUSCONI FOREIGN POLICY ADVISOR GIANPAOLO SCARANTE REQUESTED "INFORMAL" USG VIEWS ON THE POSSIBLE RENEWAL OF A LONG-FROZEN SALE OF AGUSTA HELICOPTER PARTS TO IRAN, CURRENTLY UNDER REVIEW WITHIN THE GOI.

2. (C) ACCORDING TO SCARANTE, IN 1993 THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT FROZE AGUSTA'S \$25 MILLION CONTRACT TO DELIVER  
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HELICOPTER SPARE PARTS TO THE IRANIAN GOVERNMENT. THE LEGAL BASIS FOR THAT ACTION, HE SAID, WAS THE UNCHR RESOLUTION ON IRAN IN EFFECT AT THAT TIME. IN THE YEARS THAT FOLLOWED, AS LONG AS SUCH A RESOLUTION REMAINED IN EFFECT, THE GOI WAS ABLE TO MAINTAIN ITS FREEZE ON THE SALE. WITHOUT A UNCHR RESOLUTION ON IRAN THIS YEAR, HOWEVER, SCARANTE SAID THE GOI HAD TO REVIEW WHETHER IT COULD CONTINUE TO HOLD UP DELIVERY OF THE SPARE PARTS. IN THIS CONTEXT, HE SAID HE WOULD APPRECIATE A "LOW-KEYED, INFORMAL" USG VIEW ON ITALY'S LETTING THIS SALE GO FORWARD.

3. (C) ON DECEMBER 18, ECMIN PHONED SCARANTE TO CONVEY THAT THE USG WOULD NOT/NOT FAVOR ITALY'S ALLOWING THE PARTS TO BE DELIVERED. HE REMINDED SCARANTE THAT THE LONG-STANDING U.S. EMBARGO OF MOST ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL TRANSACTIONS WITH IRAN REFLECTS OUR CONTINUED STRONG CONCERN WITH IRAN'S PURSUIT OF WMD AND BALLISTIC MISSILES, CONTINUING HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS, SUPPORT FOR INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM, AND UNHELPFUL ACTIONS VIS-A-VIS AFGHANISTAN AND MIDDLE EAST PEACE. WE LIKEWISE STRONGLY ENCOURAGED OTHER COUNTRIES TO LIMIT THEIR TRADE WITH IRAN. ECMIN ALSO URGED THE GOI TO EXAMINE THE SALE CLOSELY IN THE CONTEXT OF ITALY'S OBLIGATIONS UNDER THE WASSENAAR ARRANGEMENT.

4. (C) SCARANTE, WITHOUT ARGUING ANY OF THE ABOVE POINTS, REITERATED THAT THE AGUSTA SALE WAS SIMPLY UNDER GOI REVIEW AT THE PRESENT TIME, AND THAT USG VIEWS WOULD BE "AN IMPORTANT FACTOR" IN THAT REVIEW. ECMIN EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR SCARANTE'S HAVING CONTACTED THE U.S. EMBASSY, AND URGED THAT THE GOI OFFER US THE OPPORTUNITY TO CONSULT MORE FORMALLY IF THERE WAS ANY SERIOUS CHANCE THAT  
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THE FREEZE MIGHT BE LIFTED. SCARANTE INDICATED THAT THE GOI WOULD STAY IN TOUCH.

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